

1 John 5:14-21

“Christ Confidence”

Absolute assurance: that’s the overall thrust of 1st John; how it is we’re saved *by* Christ, what it means to be *in* Christ and what it looks like to walk *with* Christ. As we’ve mentioned along the way John wasn’t about leaving any sense of ambiguity, he didn’t use terms of uncertainty, he’s spoken quite clearly throughout this, his entire epistle.

One thing that seems to be heavy on his heart throughout this letter is to *ensure* us; that is to invoke Christ confidence *in* us so that we realize we’re not living in a “hope so” kind of state as believers, but rather we live in a “know so” environment. If you’ve placed your whole hearted faith and trust in Christ as it pertains to your eternal well being John wants you to realize that you don’t need to be left with uncertainty, wavering in fearful insecurity but you can rest assured that God has given you life eternally. Look at Vs 13 (read)

John wants us to be certain *of* it, and strengthened to continue *in* it; be confident in the work of Christ on your behalf. Think of how insulting it must be to God for us to receive this work He’s done for us yet waver in uncertainty as though when the chips are down He may not come through for us. Christ has given His life for us, God has given life in Him to us, He’s reassured us over and over again of His love for us and His desire to spend eternity with us in His word and we’re all like, “That sounds good God but...I don’t know can I *really* trust You?” Listen, “This is the testimony (Vs 11), that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” God is not a man that He should lie; now we’ve received the testimony of man (we talked about that last week) how much more should we readily, eagerly and whole-heartedly receive the testimony of God?

Life (eternal life) is in His Son. Now, Solomon wrote of life *under* the sun, you should read the book of Ecclesiastes sometime, Solomon with held himself from nothing, experienced life under the sun to the full. But in the end he discovered that it’s an empty, vain, and miserable experience; life under the sun is full of misery, pain, and sorrow. Maybe that’s where you’re at, you’re living life *under* the sun, and the fact of the matter is your life is miserable; that’s because true life, contentment and wholeness of heart is found *in* the Son; the Son of God Jesus Christ

Now that John has sought to invoke our confidence *in* Him, he beseeches us to rest in this same confidence as we come *to* Him in prayer.

Vs14-15

Now there's obviously a lot here that we need to sift through but before we do let's notice the cause and effect aspect of what we just read. Vs 14, If we ask, He hears... Vs15, if He hears, we have; that's a pretty awesome concept to try and absorb isn't it?

John says, "This is the *confidence* we have in Him" he's not even saying this is the confidence that I *want* you to have in Him as though he's trying to convince us of something. He simply states it as a matter of fact as it pertains to the power of prayer in/through the life of the believer in coming to Christ.

The word "confidence" here speaking of boldness and assurance; we're talking here about a boldness in coming before Him and an assurance in hearing/receiving from Him concerning the issue at hand.

Now there are obviously a few things we need to observe here lest we be let down when it appears as though there's a blank check issued here and we seek to fill in the amount only to have it bounce at the bank. 1st of all let's note the realm in which our confidence lies, it's found "in Him" I don't come to the Father in boldness, with an assured confidence on the basis of who I am, what I think I'm entitled to, or because of the works I've done. My reverent sense of confidence before the throne of God is based purely *upon* and found solely *in* Christ. My confidence, my blessed assurance is found in the fact that I'm in Christ by grace through faith. It has nothing to do with me, it has everything to do with Him. In writing to the Ephesians Paul said, "...according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him." Eph 3:11-12

2^{ndly} we want to consider this word “ask.” It’s a verb that’s in the present tense meaning it’s to be a continual action, we’re not to just throw up a flippant wish to heaven then forget about it as though we could take it or leave it. Listen, if it’s not a significant matter in *your* heart, why should it be a significant matter in *God’s* heart? You know, I have a # of children; and I have discovered that if something is really important to them, they have no problem bringing it to my attention over and over and over again. Even if I know that ultimately it’s not life or death, it’s important to them and they refuse to rest until it’s addressed. Now, for me sometimes that gets on my nerves, but God’s not like that, He absolutely delights in hearing what’s on your heart. So don’t just ½ heartedly bring something to the Lord, ask Him, and keep asking Him until you hear from Him *on* it or see the result *of* it. So often the reason that we don’t see God moving in our lives is quite frankly because we’re not asking Him to; prayer will many times inform, but it doesn’t always ask. God is a loving God, and a generous giver; He desires that we *ask* of Him. Remember this Vs? James 4:2, “...*you do not have because you do not ask.*” Jesus said, “*Ask, and it will be given to you;*” Matt 7:7 Again the idea there is to keep asking...

What things am I to ask for? Notice the next word, “anything”...anything? Anything; you can ask God *anything*. Now that doesn’t mean that He will grant you anything, or everything you ask for, but God wants you to bring *everything* to Him, leave no stone unturned.

Paul said, “*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;*” Phil 4:6 There’s no detail in your life that God’s not concerned about, there’s nothing too big, and there’s nothing too small to pray about, ask anything.

Now; here’s where we get to the conditional clause with regard to the promise, this Vs holds the secret of both the power of prayer and the purpose of prayer. The power of prayer (being the power of God) is found in simply asking; the power of God is released through your prayer life as you simply ask Him to move and do a work to the glory of His name.

The purpose of prayer? 2 word, “His will” if you want God to move through your prayers, than *your* heart *must* be in line with *His* heart, most of the time we’re trying to get God to conform to *our* heart’s desire. The fact of the matter is that we’re to conform and be transformed into His heart’s desire. A man by the name of George Müller put it like this: “Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance. It is laying hold of His willingness.” Now that doesn’t mean that you have to know God’s will before you pray, but as you pray you should resolve the matter in a manner like unto this: “Nevertheless not my will but Your will be done.”

So a big part of answered prayer is simply asking, a big part of unanswered prayer is not asking *according to His will*. We quoted from James Ch 4:2 a moment ago, “You do not have because you do not ask” Vs 3 says this, “*You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.*” James 4:3 So the idea here is “Not *my* will but *Thy* will be done.” In John 14 Jesus made a similar promise when He said, “*And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.*” John 14:13-14 You see the condition of a powerful prayer life is to ask (Jesus said) “in My name” or as John has it here, “according to His will.” I think that often times we see the words “in Jesus name” as sort of a postage stamp that carries our wish list to heaven. In reality what it’s to represent is that “Everything I’ve brought to You (God) everything I’ve laid down *before* You, every request I’ve made *of* You is representative of the heart of Christ, and I’ve uttered words that would come from the mouth of Christ, I’ve prayed in His name, in a manner that’s accurately reflective of Him.”

You see as I pray (not that I need to be cognitively thinking this) I should be able to ask myself, “What possible reason do I have to think that God would actually answer this prayer?” There should be some form a scriptural justification for the request I’ve made if I’m to have the confidence that I can have for God to move through my prayer life. Now that doesn’t mean I can’t ask anything (as we stated a moment ago) I just won’t have the same confidence I can have if I *know* I’m praying according to the heart of God for a situation.

Now certainly there are other things that can create obstacles to a powerful prayer life. We know that harboring sin in our heart will create a barrier, a breach (if you will) in the circuitry of my relationship with God. Not getting along with my spouse can hinder my prayer life (1 Pet 3), unresolved issues between me and someone else in the body of Christ can get in the way (Matt 5:23-25) and of course if I'm not abiding in Christ and in His word it can present a real problem (John 15:7).

But what John is emphasizing here is that we need to come *before* God, ask *of* God, according to the *will* of God. If we're asking according to His will, He'll hear and if He hears, we have. Now the question comes up, "If it's God's will anyway why should I pray about it, won't He just do it?" You know that I've wrestled over the fact that God would even choose to partner with the likes of man in the accomplishing of His purposes, why would God do that, He's so perfect, we're so not, He can get it done, we really can't. How about You just minus us out of the equation and things will go a lot better? But in reality prayer is like the thermometer of the spiritual life, and God has ordained that if I would like Him to meet my needs, than I should walk *closely* with Him and seek to maintain a relationship of *intimacy* with Him. You might say that prayer is God's way of keeping us close; prayer it's so important.

Someone once said, "*One Chief concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray.*" Charles Spurgeon said, "*I would rather teach one man to pray than 10 men to preach.*" And as long we're talking about praying from the *heart* of God, John says, "Pray for the *people* of God" notice.

Vs 16-17

Which is a simple acknowledgment of the fact that different sin can bring about different ramifications, we all sin, but there is a sin that leads to death, all unrighteousness is sin, but not every sin means the end for you (or for me).

Now, couple things we need to think through here. 1st of all John says, “If you see a brother sinning you should pray for that brother or sister.” Notice 1st of all that John says it needs to be an eyewitness account. I’m not saying you shouldn’t pray over a situation you hear about, but here’s the deal; you might be hearing of sin, but not of the person accused but because the person telling you is slandering someone or performing a bit of character assassination or whatever. We’re not to entertain slander, we’re to pray for the person whom we know personally is in sin. It’s the most powerful thing I can do for you; often times the person in sin won’t pray for themselves, they’re running, they’re trying to hide under the proverbial rock, or they’re flat out deceived. Satan comes as an angel of light and simply deceives them. How many times I’ve heard it, “I never really loved her, (or him) there was never anything there, but when I’m with him, (when I’m with her) there’s communication, genuine concern, compassion and love, I’m closer to God when I’m around them.” They’re deceived they’ve bought the web of lies Satan has pitched to them. We’re to pray for them, that God would deliver them, open their eyes, soften their hearts and grant them repentance. They’re slipping, they’re stumbling, we’re to bear them up in prayer. God says, “I’m behind a heart like that and will move in those situations.”

Now there’s always the variable of the person being prayed for, sometimes people simply don’t want to walk with God, they don’t really care if they’re right with God. God won’t force someone against their will; but you can trust that the hounds of heaven will be hot on their trail and they’ll be miserable until they make things right with the Lord.

What does it mean, “there is a sin leading to death.”? Are we talking physical death, spiritual death, removal from the planet or eternal punishment being separated from God? There are some solid people on both sides of that line and because John doesn’t say, it’s hard for us to determine. If you think it’s spiritual death, you must conclude that someone can walk away from God, turn their back on God and completely reject Jesus Christ after they’ve been saved. I’m not saying I don’t think that’s possible, I think the safety zone is abiding in Christ, outside of that the bible seems to issue some real concerns.

Others think it's physical death, that you can ruin your witness such to the extent that it's basically irreparable and God thinks it's simply better to bring you home than to leave you to do more damage to the kingdom and His cause. With this text I have a tendency to lean that direction, you find in scripture several people who sinned unto death, it doesn't mean that they weren't necessarily saved, but that God just took them home. Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10), Achan (Josh 6-7), in a certain respect even Moses, he sinned and God didn't let him take the people into the Promised Land but brought him home 1st. We find Uzzah who touched the Ark and God killed him (2 Sam 6), you find Ananias and Sapphira in Acts Ch 5, evidently some of the believers in Corinth (1 Cor 11) who were somehow defaming the Lord's supper (communion). James mentions those who are sick calling for the elders and the prayer of faith will raise him up and if he's committed any sins he'll be forgiven (Jas 5:15). So make no mistake sin can take a physical toll on us, another reason why it's so important to repent, confess and forsake our sin. Whom the Lord loves He'll chasten.

Now John isn't saying that you shouldn't pray for someone who's sinning unto death, simply that he doesn't command it. Because the disciplinary actions of God are up to God, if you're uncertain...pray; if you err to the side of praying for someone that's ok.

"Well what is the sin that leads to death?" I can't tell you, John doesn't say; I would venture to say that it's different for different people. For Ananias and Sapphira it was hypocrisy, Moses misrepresented the heart of God to the people of God, Nadab and Abihu offered profane fire (possibly were partying while seeking to be priestly; it's not wise to be one who claims Christ and parties, Corinthian believers seemed to be in that place as well). The bottom line is that God is searching our heart and we can sin to the point where God thinks it simply best to remove us from the scene.

Now, having said that we do a horrible disservice to think that every believer who seems to meet an untimely end must've been in sin therefore God disciplined them and brought them home. God is the giver and taker of life, our lives are in His hands, and if He sees fit to bring a believer home (for any reason) that's His prerogative as a general rule it's not going to be indicative of sin, though at times it may be.

Vs18-19

Here's the point: the whole world lies under the sway (or has been rocked to sleep) of the wicked one, as a child of God you're an exception. You're not under his sway, as a matter of fact you're running around waking other people up and he doesn't like that.

Now when it says that whoever is born of God does not sin, again the Greek grammar makes it clear that the point is that of habitual, continual sin. If you can sin habitually and don't have a problem lying, deceiving, stealing, partying, slandering or whatever there should be a red light going off in your heart because that's an indicator to you that you're not saved. The child of God cannot continue in that course of action; that is I can't make a practice of sin, a lifestyle of sin.

We read that the one who's been born of God keeps himself (literally keeps him) and the wicked one does not touch him. That is he doesn't cling to him and do whatever he wishes to him. Now, again we have a couple possibilities here, we're either seeing human responsibility meaning that you and I as believers aren't going to willfully subject ourselves to situations of compromise. Or (more than likely) what this is saying is that He who is born of God (a reference to Jesus) keeps him (that is the child of God) so that the wicked one doesn't touch him. Meaning that Jesus offers a certain hedge of protection to the child of God. Now if you're not born again Satan can have a hay day with you, he came to steal, to kill and to destroy and that's what he does. But as a child of God there's a measure of protection that Christ extends to you so that the enemy can't attach himself to you.

Vs20-21

Couple things in conclusion; I hope you've noticed the overwhelming confidence that John has sought to infuse in us throughout this last little passage, "We know, we know, we know, we know." The Son of God has come, and has *given* us understanding; notice it's not an intellectual accomplishment, it's an understanding that must be given by the Son of God; and it's an understanding that allows us to *know* Him who is true, to experience and gain insight into His person, His heart; and we are in Him who is true in His Son Jesus Christ ... What that means is that more than any other way God has chosen to reveal Himself to us in Christ; our understanding of Him who is true is given to us in Christ.

“This is the true God and eternal life,” just so that you know that’s a reference to Christ which makes it a very strong affirmation to His Deity.

Vs21

This whole little letter has been about the true nature of Jesus and what a relationship with Him looks like. John says, “Keep yourselves from things that detract from Him or in any way diminish the reality of who He is.” I’m not worried about you guys burning incense to a molten image, but to embrace a false concept of who God is, is a real danger. Make sure you’re *understanding* of God lines up with what’s declared in the *word* of God.

Don’t let things get between you and the Lord, keep yourselves from idols, be they hobbies, interests, things that entertain, money, power, prestige or whatever if they get between you and God, begin to take precedence over God it’s a problem.

So the final exhortation is to keep the main thing, the main thing, keep confidence in Christ and maintain a close walk and an intimate relationship with Him...

Prayer Points:

God I pray that we would be awakened to the power of prayer, that we might become more of a people of prayer. We thank You that we can bring every care, every concern *before* You and ask anything *of* You. I pray that if there be any of my brothers or my sisters here that may be struggling or in an area of sin that You might speak to them even now, working repentance to the glory of Your name. Jesus teach us to keep You as our priority, and forgive us for so often failing, we thank You for Your grace.

Perhaps right now you’re being awake to the reality of who Jesus is, you’re realize that Satan has had you fast asleep but you’re waking up now and you’re done with the deceptions of this world. Done with the sorrow, the emptiness and the vanity of life *under* the Son, you’re ready for eternal life, true life that’s found only *in* the Son, the Son of God Jesus Christ If that’s the case I’m encouraging you to call *upon* Him, to cry out *to* Him and receive Jesus Christ as Your Lord, and Your Savior right here, and right now.